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CATHOLICS AND AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP.

BY THE RIGHT REV. JAMES A. M'FAUL, BISHOP OF TRENTON.

HISTORY now records almost a century and a quarter of the national existence of the United States. This period has been characterized by a well-nigh uninterrupted and unexampled material prosperity. The thirteen original States have become a mighty nation, reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf. Recently, the American Eagle has stretched out his pinions over new territory, and problems, undreamed of by the statesmen of the past, confront this generation. This vast tract of country is peopled by diverse nationalities; but, such is our capacity for assimilation, that in one generation, or at most in two, immigrants of all nationalities become Americans, energetic and progressive, vying even with those in whose veins flows the blood of the Revolutionary Fathers in all qualities which contribute to the greatness of a nation.

Immigrants have never tired of relating the tyranny which they endured in the Old World, and have deeply instilled into the minds of their offspring love for this land which, they firmly believe, was reserved by Providence, as a refuge from civil and religious oppression, and as a soil wherein liberty and the rights of man should be so deeply planted, so ardently cherished in the hearts of the people, that they shall never more perish from the face of the earth. Among these immigrants were many children of the Catholic Church; they, in most instances, had even greater reason than their fellows to love America, for the hand of tyranny had dealt most cruelly with them in an endeavor to crush out of their hearts every aspiration after civil and religious freedom. We do not wonder, then, that they read with avidity the history of America, and blessed the day when, guided by Heaven, Columbus planted upon the shores of the New World the cross of Christ,

the symbol of Christianity and civilization; nor are we unprepared to learn that they stood shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots in the days that tried men's souls, bared their breasts to the storm of lead, and died for American liberty.

History abundantly testifies to the position taken by Catholics in favor of independence. "The Roman Catholics," says Lossing, "who were more numerous in Maryland than in any other colony, were generally the friends of liberty; and that province was among the earliest to approve the acts of the Continental Congress."*

When Washington was elected first President of the United States, the Catholics offered a congratulatory address which contains the following passage:

"This prospect of national prosperity is peculiarly pleasing to us on another account; because, whilst our country preserves her freedom and independence, we shall have a well founded title to claim from her justice, equal rights of citizenship, as well as the price of our blood spilt under your eyes, and of our common exertions for her defence, under your auspicious conduct; rights rendered more dear to us by the remembrance of former hardships."†

The Father of his Country thus replied:

"As mankind become more liberal they will be more apt to allow that all those who conduct themselves as worthy members of the community, are equally entitled to the protection of civil government. I hope ever to see America among the foremost nations in examples of justice and liberality. And I presume that your fellow-citizens will not forget the patriotic part which you took in the accomplishment of their revolution, and the establishment of their government; or the important assistance which they received from a nation [France] in which the Roman Catholic religion is professed."‡

It is unnecessary to refer to the other wars in which our country has engaged, in proof of Catholic valor, nor to the part taken by Catholics in the arts of peace. That they have faithfully supported the Constitution and signally contributed to our national greatness, is beyond dispute; and we, their descendants, rejoice exceedingly that there is no part, from base to pinnacle, of the magnificent structure of American freedom to which our sires and ourselves have not given a full share of labor and sacrifice.

In thus co-operating in the establishment of America's foundation, strength, and greatness, we have felt that we have been performing our duty to God, as well as to our country; for we do

*"Washington and the American Republic." Vol. I., p. 464.

†Brent, "Biographical Sketch of Abp. Carroll," p. 146.

‡Sparks, "Life of Washington," Vol. XII., p. 178.

not doubt that the founding of these United States, their Constitution, their progress, their prosperity, are but the unfolding of the designs of the Most High. Indeed, we recognize it as certain that every nation, in its unwritten Constitution born with the people, of which the written Constitution is the more or less perfect expression, manifests its mission, and the destiny for which it has been formed by the Almighty. The Christian student of history is convinced of this truth, although he may not, in every instance, find it possible to give to a people its due setting, amid the historical fragments of ages and events.

Convinced that men came from God by creation, and go back to Him by grace, by sanctification, and that the race must continue until the heavenly thrones, left vacant by the defeated and fallen hosts, shall have been filled by the regenerated children of men, he realizes that, in laying the foundations of the world, God had a determined purpose in view, and that He guides and directs all things toward its accomplishment.

In a beautiful mosaic, every stone has its appropriate place, its requisite color, its due relation to the whole and to the adjoining parts. When the entire design has been completed, under the hand and mind of the skillful artist, then only is the full effect perceptible; so, in the history of the world, in the career of nations, in the creation and sanctification of men, every event, every act, has its proper bearing, and tends toward the building up and the bringing to perfection of the chief end of the Almighty—His own glory and the eternal welfare of men.

It is true that, when we approach man, a new factor, free will, enters into the attainment of a nation's destiny; and, therefore, nations, like individuals, may culpably fail to comply with God's will. But the great general plan of Providence is always accomplished. As the tiny stream, trickling down the mountain side and running through the meadows, joined by other streamlets, becomes a river, and, diverted from its course by the handiwork of man, here turns a mill, there slakes a city's thirst, ever seeks the ocean's unfathomable depths; so human events, shaped and controlled by Omnipotence, and moving always onward, bring the divine plan to ultimate perfection.

Who can doubt the providential mission of the Hebrews; the care, guidance and preservation exercised over them by Jehovah, all looking forward to the great, pivotal event of the centuries, the

birth of the Messiah? The thinker will not be inclined to deny that Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome held their special places in the designs of Heaven. It is evident that the Romans broke down the barriers between nations, and prepared the world for the sowing of the Gospel seed.

America, too, has her mission and her destiny. God has singled her out among the nations to accomplish His most cherished designs for the freedom, the elevation and the sanctification of the individual and of society.

One of the brightest minds which this country has produced thus outlines the mission of the United States:

"The American Republic has a mission, and is chosen of God for the realization of a great idea. It has been chosen not only to continue the work assigned to Greece and Rome, but to accomplish a greater work than was assigned to either. * * * Its idea is liberty, indeed, but liberty with law, and law with liberty. Yet its mission is not so much the realization of liberty as the realization of the true idea of the state, which secures at once the authority of the public and the freedom of the individual—the sovereignty of the people without social despotism, and individual freedom without anarchy. * * * The Greek and Roman republics asserted the state to the detriment of individual freedom. * * * The American Republic has been instituted by Providence to realize the freedom of each with advantage to the other."*

Convinced of the reality and the sublimity of America's mission, rejoicing that he participates in it, the American Catholic sings with an enthusiastic patriotism not surpassed by that of any of his fellow-citizens:

"My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above."

Beyond doubt, the rights, the principles of liberty and of justice set forth in the American Constitution, and guaranteed to all citizens, justify these sentiments and these aspirations.

The author already mentioned thus refers to the rights secured by the Constitution:

"Our government is a free government; this is its boast. It is so in fact; not precisely because it is a popular government, for the people may play the tyrant as well as kings and emperors, and the arbitrary

*Brownson, "The American Republic," pp. 4 and 5.

will of a majority is as incompatible with true liberty as any other arbitrary will; but because it is founded on the principle that all men are equal before the state, and that every man has certain inalienable rights, called with us the 'Rights of Man,' which it is bound by its very Constitution to recognize and protect. * * * Among these rights is the right of conscience, or the right before the state of every citizen to choose his own religion, and to worship God as his own conscience dictates, so long as his conscience is not made a pretext for violating the equal rights of others, disturbing the peace, or outraging public decency. As all are held to be equal before the state, this right of conscience must be held by the government sacred and inviolable in the case of every citizen, or subject of the state. * * * My religion is my conscience; my conscience is my right, and included in that liberty which the state recognizes, and is instituted to protect. Every citizen can say as much of his religion. * * * My church is my right, is included in my right as an American citizen; and she has the right to be here, because I have the right myself to be here, and to have my own religion. My right to have my own religion is my right to have that religion, as I am bound by it in conscience to hold it."*

These logical conclusions from the Constitution of the United States apply as well to the Constitutions of the several States. They are just as explicit in declaring that there shall be no discrimination against American citizens by reason of their religion, and that their religion shall be fully protected.

In the light of these principles, which I consider incontrovertible, Catholics, as American citizens, have rights even when there is question of their religion. I do not expect those who are ignorant of the nature, tendencies and mission of the Republic, and blinded through prejudice to their own infidelity to the sacred truths underlying the Constitution, to admit the reasoning of the learned authority whom I have quoted at some length. His conclusions, however, will be admitted and valued by all who are qualified to speak on the subject, by all thoughtful, conscientious Americans, lovers of the Constitution, anxious to see its God-given principles develop, and to assist in the fulfillment of our country's mission and destiny.

The question now naturally arises: Are Catholics in the United States permitted to enjoy their Constitutional rights in their integrity; are they allowed the free exercise of their religion; does the flag guarantee and protect them in rights equivalent to those of every other citizen; are there any grievances of which, as American citizens, we ought to complain? Here I shall direct attention to our religious rights in penal, charitable and

educational institutions under public control. Nothing can be more reasonable than our demands regarding liberty of conscience in these institutions. We ask that the priest be allowed to preach the Catholic doctrine to Catholic adults, and to teach Catholic children the Catholic catechism; to offer Mass, so that Catholics may be present at it; to administer the sacraments; and that Catholics shall not be compelled to listen to non-Catholic teaching, nor to participate in any worship except their own. In a word, we claim for Catholic clergymen the right to enter our State institutions, at seasonable times, to give the benefits of the Catholic religion to Catholics, and we demand that the system of worship and of religious teaching at present existing in many institutions—a system which leads to proselytism—shall be abolished.

The Constitutions of the United States and of the several States guarantee the rights of conscience to the inmates of public institutions. Why, then, are Catholics obliged to be present at non-Catholic prayers and instructions? Why should clergymen be subjected to annoyance, and often to harshness, when bringing the Catholic inmates the consolations of religion? It is true we have succeeded in gaining a portion of our rights in some institutions, but this has been the result of a long and arduous struggle against injustice.

Hence, in my letter to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, assembled in National Convention, this year, in Boston, I advised that they, in union with other societies composed of Catholics, should endeavor to procure a proportionate representation of Catholics on the Boards of Management of all public institutions. This is necessary if we are to enjoy freedom of conscience; for, as only a Catholic can fully appreciate our position in relation to religious worship, religious instruction, and moral training, especially in reformatories, he alone is qualified to obtain and protect our Constitutional rights.

At the same time, and in my Trenton address to the Knights of Columbus, I referred to the treatment of our Indian Schools, and to strengthen my position I quoted from a letter, issued with a view to obtaining funds, which bore the names of Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishops Ryan and Kain:

"Despite the fact that Religious Orders and other Catholic bodies have equipped schools for the education of the Indian children, in full

confidence that the government would not reverse its recognized and successful policy of subsidizing these schools—yet in the height of their success and in spite of their doing the work cheaper and better than the government itself could do it, we find that the subsidy has been for the greater part and will eventually be entirely withdrawn, and that these well founded works of Catholic benevolence, begun in good faith and with great expenditure of time and money, are to be abandoned to their fate.”

Fanaticism opposed our legitimate demands, and the cry went forth: “The schools are sectarian.” This is the old subterfuge to which our enemies constantly resort. They would rather have the Indian children grow up without religion than taught the tenets of the Catholic Church. Many otherwise well-informed persons are deceived by the term “non-sectarian.” There is no form of religion to which it can apply, since every religion has some sort of worship and doctrine, and, therefore, even in the sense of the bigots, it is sectarian. To be non-sectarian would require the absence of all religion. To dilute Christianity beyond recognition, and to call it non-sectarian, is to fall back upon that refined paganism so common in this age, and to oppose Christianity itself.

How inconsistent are the fanatics! They are daily clamoring for the conversion of the inhabitants of our new possessions to a faith that is rapidly undermining its own foundation, the Bible; while at home the poor Indians are doomed to extinction, and millions of our countrymen are left without Christian teaching.

Spain has many a crime to answer for; but she has allowed the Church to sit down like a mother, amid the children of the forest and the plain, to save the native races, and teach them the doctrines of Christianity and the arts of civilization.

On the Amendment brought up this year, giving the Secretary of the Interior the right to extend the contract with certain schools for Indian pupils, because the government possessed inadequate accommodation, Senator Vest spoke as follows:

“The only objection I could possibly make to it is that the amendment does not go far enough. * * * There are people in this country, unfortunately, who believe that an Indian child had better die an utter unbeliever * * * than to be educated by the Society of Jesus or in the Catholic Church. I am very glad to say that I have not the slightest sympathy with that sort of bigotry and fanaticism. * * * Some years ago, I was assigned by the Senate to duty upon the Committee on Indian Affairs, * * * to examine the Indian schools in Wyoming and Montana. * * * I crossed that great buffalo expanse of country,

where you can now see only the wallows and trails of those extinct animals, and I went to all these schools. I wish to say now what I have said before in the Senate, * * * that I did not see in all my journey * * * a single school that was doing any educational work worthy of the name of educational work, unless it was under the control of the Jesuits. I did not see a single government school * * * where there was any work done at all.”*

During this year, there was under consideration, in the House of Representatives, the District of Columbia Appropriation Bill. Representative Fitzgerald, of Boston, in showing the inconsistency of certain appropriations, thus expressed himself:

“A great hue and cry have been raised in various sections of this country during the past ten years as to the propriety of Congress making appropriations which some people choose to term sectarian; and, in certain sections of the country, this matter has been made an issue, with the result that the members of this House, when matters of this kind have been discussed, and questions of this nature have come before the House, have voted in accordance with the promises made in their district before they came to the House, and not at all in accordance with the principles of justice and fair play which should characterize the proceedings of this body.

“I find in the present appropriation bill which is up for consideration at the present time, in the matter of appropriations for private charities, \$4,000 given to the Women’s Christian Association, and \$1,000 for the Young Women’s Christian Home, organizations and associations which are essentially religious in every particular; and yet no question has ever been raised by this House or by the Committee as to the propriety of making these appropriations. No charge of sectarianism has ever been advanced upon the floor of this House against either of these institutions; yet every member must admit that religious teachings and religious training are the essential factors, and justly so, in the work of both these institutions. * * * What is the condition of affairs here in this District? There is a man occupying the position of Superintendent of Charities, who is, in my opinion, one of the meanest bigots in the United States. * * * This is the man to whom this House of Congress has turned over the care and custody of the orphan children of this great city. * * * To whom must we look to protect these children, to guide them, to bring them up as they should be brought up? The Board of Children’s Guardians. * * * These children are taken by this man, Lewis, to be placed in suitable homes in different parts of the country; and, with a man of his narrow views and prejudices, what guarantee is there that a child of Catholic parents will be placed in a Catholic family?”*

In relation to this bill, Senator Vest said:

“I have been of the opinion * * * that every sort of charity and every sort of school that kept the boys and girls of the country out of the penitentiary, out of the house of correction, out of the jails, and

*Cong. Record, Vol. 33, n. 94, p. 4120.

*Cong. Record, Vol. 33, n. 146, p. 7411.

made of them honest, industrious, law-abiding citizens, ought to be encouraged, and that whenever it was done, if what was done inured to the benefit of public order and public decency, the Congress of the United States should encourage that work, and should have it done in the best and most economical way.”*

Alas, the Constitution plays strange antics under the influence of unscrupulous manipulators. To-night, we go to bed firm in the belief that the appropriation to certain institutions will be continued, to-morrow we awake to find this cannot be done, because they are “sectarian.”

We have been accused of opposition to the present system of public schools, and we certainly look upon it as detrimental to the best interests of the United States. Let no one imagine, however, that we are opposed to a system of public education; on the contrary, we contend that it is absolutely necessary for the permanency of free institutions. What we object to is education without religion; the payment of taxes for the support of schools to which we cannot conscientiously send our children. Religious education is even more necessary than secular, even if we value only the temporal welfare of the individual and society. We shall, however, be told: “Teach religion in your churches.” No one, I presume, will accuse Catholics of neglect in this matter, and yet we are satisfied that such teaching alone is insufficient.

There are three great educators: the home, the church, and the school. Even these, powerful as they are, acting under the most favorable circumstances, are sometimes unable to cultivate the degraded and the obstinate. Great, then, is the danger to be feared from a defective system of schools. Consider the result to which this system has contributed, as shown by the present religious condition of the United States. Our population is over seventy millions. There are from ten to twelve millions of Catholics, and the most enthusiastic Protestants do not claim beyond eighteen or twenty millions. The remaining millions acknowledge allegiance to no Church whatsoever.

I am far from maintaining that the public-school system is the sole cause of this religious indifference. It is clear, however, that people cannot be made religious without teaching them religion. When we reflect that men without religion are, as a rule, men without morality, religious education assumes great importance in the eyes of every patriotic American. Tell me not of isolated ex-

**Cong. Record*, Vol. 33, n. 126, p. 5978.

amples of men who have scoffed at religion, and yet have lived apparently pure lives, have respected the rights of their fellow-men, and have been faithful to their family relations. Such qualities are not products of irreligion. They have sprung from Christian enlightenment, from the influence of the principles of Christianity, which have permeated society during the past nineteen centuries.

Religion is absolutely necessary for the perpetuation of our free institutions, and the Catholic puts himself on record as an ardent patriot, when he raises his voice in its defense, and declares that our schools should be devoted to religious as well as to secular education.

Speaking of the influence of religion on social institutions, Mr. Bryce says:

"No one is so thoughtless as not to sometimes ask himself what would befall mankind if the solid fabric of belief on which their morality has hitherto rested, or at least been deemed by them to rest, were suddenly to break up and vanish under the influence of new views of nature, as the ice-fields split and melt when they have floated down into a warmer sea. * * * So sometimes, standing in the midst of a great American city, and watching the throngs of eager figures streaming hither and thither, marking the sharp contrasts of poverty and wealth, an increasing mass of wretchedness, and an increasing display of luxury, knowing that before long a hundred millions of men will be living between ocean and ocean under this one government—a government which their own hands have made, and which they feel to be the work of their own hands—one is startled by the thought of what might befall this huge, yet delicate, fabric of laws and commerce and social institutions, were the foundations it has rested on to crumble away. Suppose that all these men ceased to believe that there was any power above them, any future before them, anything in heaven or earth but what their senses told them of; suppose that their consciousness of individual force and responsibility, already dwarfed by the overwhelming power of the multitude, and the fatalistic submission it engenders, were further weakened by the feeling that their swiftly fleeting life was rounded by a perpetual sleep. Would the moral code stand unshaken, and with it the reverence for law, the sense of duty towards the community, and even towards the generations yet to come? * * * History, if she cannot give a complete answer to this question, tells us that hitherto civilized society has rested on religion, and that free government has prospered best among religious peoples."*

Irreligion, indeed, has not made such progress among us as to bring about these dire results, but its seeds are sown and cultivated by a system of education, which has been instrumental in leaving

*"The American Commonwealth," Vol. II., p. 597.

millions without the blessings of Christianity. Still, if our fellow-countrymen must have this school system, to quarrel with them is useless. We should, however, not be prevented from enjoying its benefits in so far as our conscience will permit. I am far from presuming to speak for the Catholic hierarchy of this country; nevertheless, I would suggest that our parochial schools be left just as they are, that a Board of Examiners be appointed to determine whether our teachers impart the secular education required by the State, and then let payment be made for each child's secular education. The State is not required to pay for religious education, nor to support in any way the Catholic Church; it is asked simply to grant Catholics full participation in all their Constitutional rights.

Here let me introduce another subject. Why were not several Catholic members appointed on the Commissions to our new possessions? They could have appreciated the civil and religious conditions of those countries, and suggested suitable measures for their adjustment. I do not hesitate to affirm that for a non-Catholic, even with the best disposition, it would be morally impossible to render an impartial report, or to make just recommendations.

Instead of approaching, in the spirit of a broad and enlightened statesmanship, the problems presented, the prejudices against our government sown by the Spaniards were allowed to be increased by the conduct of our soldiers, and the desecration of the churches wherein the solemn rites so dear to a Catholic people had been daily performed.

Another outrage is the Cuban Civil Marriage Law. A petition has been presented to General Wood asking for a repeal of the order issued in May, 1899, by General Brooke, whereby civil marriage alone is declared legally valid. How could an American so far forget the traditions and laws of his own country as to inflict this importation from the infidel governments of Europe upon a Catholic people? Why not have the same law there as in the United States, and declare that marriage solemnized before a minister of religion shall be recognized as legal by the civil authorities? This thoughtless, careless act of legislation demonstrates to a nicety the utter disregard, among a certain class in this country, of the rights of Catholics.

Again, we are entitled to a greater number of chaplains in the

army and navy. So far as I have been able to ascertain, there are only three Catholic chaplains in the navy, notwithstanding that a large proportion of the marines are of the Catholic faith; in the army there are but four Catholic chaplains.

In the late war, many a brave Catholic lad breathed forth his soul to his Creator without the consolations of that religion which planted patriotism in his heart, simply because the men in authority ignored our religious rights. These are some of the grievances under which Catholics labor, and they are certainly serious enough to justify a movement towards redress.

I cannot claim the honor of first suggesting concerted action among Catholic societies. This subject has been widely discussed for several years, and I thought proper to draw the attention of two of the largest organizations composed of Catholics to such a movement, since it certainly is our duty to select some legitimate means of obtaining our rights under the Constitutions of the States and the nation. Language cannot more plainly declare than my Boston letter and my Trenton address, that I have not the remotest idea of promoting or even suggesting a Catholic political party. It will be necessary, of course, to have organization; all societies composed of Catholics should endeavor to touch at certain points, so that, while each retains its identity and pursues its own aims, there may be a bond of union enabling them to exert a concerted influence; but the formation of a political party is not contemplated.

Our position is simply this. We are American citizens, entitled to certain rights, and these we must possess. Bigotry shall not be allowed to deprive us of the exercise and enjoyment of any of them. We ask no favors, we beg no privileges; but we demand that our religion shall not be made a bar to the attainment of our rights under the Constitution. It is not to bring our religion into politics that an appeal is made to the Catholic laity of America; on the contrary, it is to keep religion out of politics. American citizens, because they are Catholics, are discriminated against, and we are determined to unite for the purpose of defending ourselves against this un-American bigotry. Nor is this a movement to obtain political office for Catholics, as such; it is, however, a campaign of education, and it extends to non-Catholics as well as to Catholics. We shall not stand alone in this struggle. I have the greatest confidence in the intelligence and justice of my fellow-

countrymen; I feel assured that all true Americans will assist us to the utmost of their ability by legitimate methods to redress grievances, to obtain our rights, and to resent insult to our religion.

My experience leads me to the conclusion that a policy of silence has been very detrimental to our interests. That great man, General Grant, is related to have given the following advice regarding a certain question which was brought to his knowledge: "These people," said the President, "get together, call meetings, get up petitions, and send deputies down here, and thus they often secure their object. Now, that is what you Catholics should do. Do as they do. Get together, make out a statement of your case, and back it with as much force as you can muster." This advice is applicable to local boards, State Legislatures, the National Congress, and other departments of government.

In what channels shall the influence of this movement, or organization, manifest itself? This question will be answered in due time. Able leaders will determine upon legitimate, honorable, and Constitutional methods, as the cause grows and prospers, and passes beyond the stage of theory and suggestion to that of practice and action.

JAMES A. McFAUL.